DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 172 EA 013 253

AUTHOR Lofberg, Arvid; Wahlstrom, Olle
TITLE Pedagogics and the School Environment. Project No. 679. School Research Newsletter.
INSTITUTION National Swedish Board of Education, Stockholm.
PUB DATE May 79
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Architectural Programing; Case Studies; Design Requirements; *Educational Environment; *Educational Facilities Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Student Participation; *Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

This newsletter summarizes a research project in Sweden aimed at studying the participation of school personnel in the school planning process. The project involved following the planning of three schools in Sodertalje where the personnel had been given the opportunity to participate. Project data were collected by attending planning meetings; studying minutes, reports, and drawings; interviewing people; and talking to the personnel at the various schools. The newsletter discusses the obstacles to genuine personnel participation and concludes with a number of proposed changes aimed at improving opportunities for personnel and pupils to take part in planning. (MLF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

May 1979 Concluded project 1979:2

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
K. Jansson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED196172

EA 013 253

Title of project: Pedagogics and the school environment

Project no: 679

Conducted at: The Department of Education, University of Stockholm, and the Institute of Technology, Stockholm

Tutors Arvid Löfberg, Ph.D., and Professor Olle Wåhlström

Project leader Ann Skantze, B.A.

Other participants Ronald Colven and Jadwiga Krępinska, architects

Background and problem sector

A conference of school management, architects and educationalists from Denmark, Norway and Sweden was held at the NBE in Stockholm in the autumn of 1975 to discuss problems connected with the planning and design of school buildings. It transpired that the school environment and the planning thereof needed to be related to educational ideas and programmes.

Previously the main emphasis of research in this field had been on the design of the actual school building or its constituent rooms. In the early 1970s the problem seemed to be concerned with the choice between an open school building with open study

Postal address S-106 42 STOCKHOLM | Office address Karlavägen 108 | Telephone No 08 - 14 06 60 | Editor ~~Karin Flynn~~ Karin Jansson | ISSN 0345-5343

facilities and a traditional classroom school. There were difficulties involved, however, in the connection between planning and school design and, on the other hand, pedagogics, teachers, pupils and their working methods. The "experts" who did the planning (architects, the NBE, cosultants, local government representatives etc.) had one thing in mind, while the people actually using the facilities had another. Architects, educationalists and the NBE now asked themselves what form a school ought really to be given and how it should be planned.

Thus there were deficiencies concerning knowledge of the interaction of pedagogics and physical design in schools. In addition, it was felt that the general aims of the curriculum needed to be integrated with school design and with research into the actual planning process.

The participation of school personnel in the planning process was referred to at the conference as a necessary means of gearing pedagogical viewpoints and ideas to the design of the building.

A research project aimed at penetrating these problems was jointly inaugurated in 1976 by the School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology and the Department of Education in the University of Stockholm. Professor Olle Wåhlström and Dr. Arvid Löfberg were appointed tutors to the project.

The project team comprised Ronald Colven and Jadwiga Krupinska - both architects - together with Ann Skantze B.A. (project leader).

Purpose and points of inquiry

The purpose of the research in question here is to elicit knowledge which can be applied to future school planning activities. We approach school personnel and architects in the hope that they will be able to use our findings to influence their role and situation. But we also address ourselves to local and nation-

al authorities and other bodies so as to obtain their assistance in revising specifications, decision-making processes etc.

We felt that it was important to find answers to the following main questions. In what way can the overriding aims of the curriculum and educational deliberations influence the planning and design of a school? What obstacles and opportunities exist regarding the participation of teachers and pupils in the planning process? What demands does their participation make on the planning process?

Procedure

The overriding objectives imply that schools - via the teacher - should help the pupil to acquire greater knowledge of the world at large. To begin with, therefore, we wished to penetrate the problem of how knowledge is attained and what qualities ought therefore to be included in an educational environment. Accordingly we consulted developmental psychology, which is the science showing how people learn and acquire knowledge of the world.

We then decided to follow the planning of three schools in Södertälje where the personnel had been given the opportunity of participating.

The selection was based on the accessiblity of the schools and on the fact of their being at suitable, i.e. different stages of the planning process. One school, Hovsjö, is in Södertälje The other two, Turinge and Björkesta, are in Nykvarn, which is about 10 km away from Södertälje. Hovsjö and Turinge schools comprise senior level grades, while Björkesta is made up of junior and intermediate level grades.

We collected our material by attending planning meetings, studying minutes, reports and drawings, interviewing people and talking to the personnel at the various schools. The main focus was on the reference groups, because they included personnel representatives.

Desision making being a fundamental part of the planning process, we charted the evolution of the decisions. This was done for purposes of research and information.

When we studied the decision-making process and interviewed teachers in the Hovsjö reference group, we found two areas which greatly influenced planning, namely local government (municipal) planning, which also includes the building process, and its routines and, secondly, the guidelines or norms of different authorities. We found it necessary to investigate the manner in which these areas influence and govern school planning and the participation of the reference groups.

To enhance the general validity of our description of planning routines, we contacted the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and representatives of various municipalities in Sweden.

Consequences in terms of curricular aims and developmental psychology

The overriding aims emphasize the importance of broadening the pupils' knowledge, using the term "knowledge" in its widest possible sense. They also state that each individual should be enabled, together with others, to take an active interest in and exert influence on his own and the common situation his own and the common environment. This requires knowledge.

Developmental psychology has shown that knowledge is an active process. The activities - reflective and structural - of the individual are essential factors in this process.

In order to have any chance of finding his way in the world at large, the pupil must be enabled to analyse his reality and to build on, use and develop his way of thinking.

Thinking capacity, problem solving capacity and the accumulation of knowledge are closely bound up with actions and activities and with interaction together with other people. One precondition of the pupil being able to be active and exert influence is that the teacher can be a partner in interaction who is also able to influence and participate in planning, evaluation, development etc.

We maintain that if schools - in keeping with the curricular objectives - are to be a dynamic force in social development, their activities should stimulate greater participation by teachers and pupils in matters of common interest. Centrally determined guidelines, frames and stipulations concerning the school sector should be based on this foundation. This is essential in order for pupils to be able to continue being active and loyal members of the community and to function similarly at work and in the communities where they live, and it has constituted a vital part of the analysis of the material which we have collected.

Obstacles to genuine personnel participation

Our exploration of the planning process has shown that the decisions made before the reference group came on to the scene were both numerous and important. The reference groups were consulted late in the day, particularly as regards plans for the two new schools. Uncertainty and ignorance existed concerning previous decisions and their effects on subsequent opportunities. We found that the structure of the decision-making process was of great importance to common work and discussions, to the feedback of experience and to opprotunities of participating and accumulating knowledge.

The Hovsjö reference group met on few occasions, and there were changes of participants between meetings. The paritcipants were only given a couple of days in which to assimilate a great deal of material. At the meetings themselves, there was not enough time for close discussions. Not all personnel groups were represented. The desires put forward were to a great extent individual; people were preoccupied with their own departments and consequently failed to see the wood. In one case a teacher vehemently objected to the way his subject room had been designed. He was unable to influence the end result, however, and he resigned in protest.

In one of the groups, municipal officials were regarded as official personages who were only there to be listened to.

Priorities and changes were decided in two of the planning processes without the reference groups being consulted. In certain cases difficulties were encountered in reading the architect's drawings. The school personnel lacked knowledge or experience of previous planning work; there is a lack of continuity, a failure to conserve and utilize knowledge. Each group starts from scratch, and this points to the need for greater continuity. The pupils have only been enabled to participate to a very slight extent.

The Hovsjö teachers were very uncertain as to what they wanted their school to be like and why. Their desires were individual. They did not have any common ground to stand on, nor did they have time for detailed discussions concerning what they wanted to do or how they wanted to work in their school.

All the factors described above constituted objectives to genuine participation. One of our suggestions is that co-determination should be based on locally evolved planning of activities in agreement with the overriding objectives. The interviews of teachers at Turinge indicate that difficulties surrounding the planning of activities in this way can stem from the traditional isolated and specialized role of the teacher, the subject focus imposed by the syllabus, teaching materials, and forms of examination. Timetable planning, time allocation, resource allocation principles and traditional organization are other obstacles. This is particularly true at senior level. A contradiction between overriding curricular objectives and course design/teaching materials/forms of examination, with the grading function of school imposing controls on the teacher, can also constitute an impediment to development opportunities and the integration of objectives.

Since the personnel had not helped to draw up the programmes, the architect did not have access to a programme in any of the planning processes. The responsibilities of the architect towards users and clients is a topic requiring further investigation. The Hovsjö local authorities were under financial strain or constraint, with the result that there was only a limited amount of time available for joint planning. Consequently it was not

possible to produce illustrations which would be readily intelligible to laymen. The architect has little chance of utilizing knowledge and experience from previous projects, because evaluation of the school environment is practically non-existens.

The majority of decisions - and the most crucial ones - are made, and norms conditioned, during the sketching stage and when the main documents are finalized. This means that a larger work input is needed at this stage in order for a dialogue with the reference group to be possible.

Where norms are concerned, we found that they have a steering effect but that the NBE's specifications can be interpreted in a very great variety of ways. It is important that the reference groups realize the existence of various possible interpretations. Ignorance of the possibility of interpreting specifications is a limiting factor in itself. For example, habits and routines which are believed to exist can impose invisible controls. The planning situation is steered and restricted by preconceived notions as to what can or cannot be influenced, as well as the accpetance of unwritten rules and practice.

We have proposed a number of changes aimed at improving opportunities for personnel and pupils to take part in planning. These proposals are based on the assumption that the emphasis of school planning is on the planning of school activities. These implies a decentralization whereby the objectives of the school system are concretized in terms of activities at local level, and also demands for a planning process which is more flexible and adaptable.

Our proposals are presented under the following heads

- Planning of activities

The work of the reference group should be rooted in continuous planning of educational activities in school. This planning should emanate from the overriding objectives of the curriculum and should be conducted at the local school. Together with wider scope for action, the planning of activities can provide opportunities for rooting planning more firmly in everyday work,

reducing the individuality and uncertainty of the desires expressed, and achieving a deeper cognitive process and educational development. We would like to see research done concerning central guidelines and local scope for action.

- The active attitude of the reference group

The case studies in our project pointed to the importance of the reference group being active. The reference group increases its opportunities of exerting influence by making clear which activities it wants to achieve, by working on problems, by pursuing matters further, by defining priorities when necessary, by looking for new expedients. It is also important to define the forms in which the reference group and the architect are to cooperate.

- The planning process - the decision-making process

We have found that the decision-making process does a great deal to influence and control the opportunities of personnel participation. Active educationalists should be given the opportunity of stating viewpoints before guidelines and facility programmes are drawn up. Greater resources should be channelled into the programming and sketching phases. The process should afford both time and economic resources for the continuous participation of personnel and pupils and for their involvment in decision making. The process should be "softened up" so that it can be rooted in the local planning of activities. There is also a need for a transfer of experience between different planning processes.

- Continuous reference groups

We have proposed the establishment of a continuous group system in order to counteract the isolation of reference groups and facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one planning process to another. The idea is for one or two members of reference groups involved in previous school planning projects to join the new reference group. It will also be their task to monitor new school planning projects and general aspects of school buildings during the intervals between school building projects

in the municipality itself.

- The responsibilities of the arcitect

At present the architect has a complex and awkward collection of responsibilities towards different parties in the planning process. This problem should be studied further. We feel that emphasis should be placed on the role of the school personnel as client. The possibility of a relationship of trust between architect and personnel has a vital bearing on the avoidance of communication problems.

- Increasing the volume of work done by the architect

Closer contacts with users will also require an increase in the volume of work done by the architect. As things now stand, the architect has little working time at the beginning of the process, and often he does not follow his project all the way through to the commissioning of the building.

- Alteration of the function of the NBE

Our proposals imply the assumption by the NBE of a partially new function whereby it ventures into the field to supply information on specifications, educational activities, research findings, experimental activities etc. which can support the interests of reference groups. Activities are constantly developing in such a way as to impose new demands on the phycical environment. Specifications concerning State grants and the design of buildings ought not therefore to be conservative or static. This means that specifications should always be critically appraised when conflicts occur. Reference groups may need support with regard to the design of specifications and possible interpretations.

- Overriding factors

A heavily competitive situation jeopardizes quality and can lead to a shortage of time. A steady and well thougth-out pace of school building development is needed in order for time to be

available for co-operation and in order for environmental quality to be achieved.

We believe that these proposals can help to increase user participation. Both curricular objectives and the development of cognitive theory testify to the importance of teachers and pupils being enabled to participate more extensively in matters of common concern. Centrally determined guidelines, frames and school regulations should be established on this foundation. It is partly by changing and developing its working methods, its routines of planning and evaluation and its decision-making structure that the school system can come to play an important part in deepening individual and collective knowledge production.